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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CHISINAU 000685

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STATE FOR EUR/UMB

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [PINR](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: LUPU FEELS "WINDS OF CHANGE" IN THE AIR

Classified by: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

REFS: (A) Chisinau 675; (B) Chisinau 644 (C)
Chisinau 643

¶1. (C) Summary: In a September 3 meeting with the Ambassador, Presidential hopeful Marian Lupu expressed skepticism about Acting President Voronin's recent announcement that he would vacate his Presidential position for his seat in Parliament. Lupu also described recent meetings with the Russian Ambassador, who was pushing him to form an Alliance with the Communists. In fact, in a recent meeting with Acting President Voronin, Lupu had directly refused a proposal for a "left-center" alliance with Voronin as Speaker, Lupu as President and (current Prime Minister) Greceanii as PM.

¶2. (C) Lupu also said he hoped for a positive decision on the legality of Alliance member Mihai Ghimpu's election as Speaker when the Constitutional Court delivered its verdict on September 8. The Alliance might wait to hold the next Parliamentary session until after the Court's decision. Assuming that the Court ruled in the Alliance's favor, Lupu said the Alliance would then declare the post of President vacant so that Speaker Ghimpu could assume the position of Acting President, and then name Alliance member Vlad Filat as interim Prime Minister to serve until a President was elected. Lupu was increasingly convinced that Moldova was heading for repeat elections in 2010. End Summary.

Lupu Skeptical about Voronin's Resignation

¶3. (C) In a September 3 meeting with the Ambassador, Marian Lupu was skeptical about Voronin's announcement the day before that he would vacate the Presidential slot to remain as Member of Parliament (Ref A). Lupu cautioned that Voronin was shrewd, and may have just floated the concept to see how people reacted. Lupu said it was important to wait and see what Voronin actually does. Lupu also noted that Voronin had already violated the law by not stepping down when the Parliament convened after the April elections. He speculated that Voronin wanted to be an MP to enjoy Parliamentary immunities that would protect Voronin against violations he had already committed.

Russian Ambassador Pushing for Coalition with PCRM

¶4. (C) Lupu acknowledged that he had numerous

meetings with Russian Ambassador Valery Kuzmin over the past few weeks. Lupu said that the Russian had pushed him to form a "left-center" coalition with the PCRM.. Kuzmin's most recent conversation had centered on the question of whether Lupu would be amenable to such a coalition if Voronin stepped down as PCRM leader. Asked directly if there was anyone Lupu could accept as PCRM head, Lupu had insisted that there was not. Lupu said he also told the Russian Ambassador that at this point the influence of the Communists was so strong that if any of the non-communist parties joined them, they would be "eaten alive." Lupu said he had acknowledged that such a "left-center" coalition might be possible further down the road, but not now.

Meeting with President Voronin -----

15. (C) Though Lupu had publicly denied press reports that he had met with Acting President Voronin on August 31, he confirmed for Ambassador that this meeting had indeed taken place. Lupu said that Voronin had invited him to meet, so he thought it "a mature approach" to accept the invitation, and went together with fellow Democratic Party member (and former party leader) Dumitru Diacov. Lupu said he could see that Diacov was intimidated by Voronin; in fact, Voronin began the meeting by berating Diacov for having "always been a traitor."

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16. (C) Lupu said that Voronin had proposed the establishment of a "left-center" coalition of the PCRM and the Democratic Party. Noting that he knew Lupu had long dreamed of becoming President, Voronin proposed a scenario in which he retained the Speaker position, Lupu was President, and Greceanii was Prime Minister. Lupu told the Ambassador he had responded negatively to Voronin's proposal, saying that what the Acting President did not understand was that the people want change now and keeping Voronin and Greceanii in power even in coalition with another party did not represent change.

17. (C) Lupu said that Voronin was aware of the details of his August meeting in Moscow (Ref B). He had also noted that the Russian Ambassador had clearly been fully briefed on this meeting in Moscow. Lupu said that Voronin also had told him "not to pay too much attention" to the advice given him by the Romanians and the Americans, and with a pause added "even the Russians."

Waiting for Constitutional Court Decision -----

18. (C) Lupu also told the Ambassador that he had secretly met with the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, Pulbare. Lupu said he told the Chairman that he understood that Pulbare was working for Voronin, but had warned Pulbare that Voronin's days were numbered, and that it was important to do the right thing (by which he meant making a decision in favor of the Alliance's election of Ghimpu as Speaker). Lupu told the Ambassador that he knew Pulbare "likes money," but since unfortunately he had none to offer, he could only give Pulbare a vague promise that, "If you make the right decision, I'll take care of you."

19. (C) Lupu believed his meeting with Pulbare had

a positive effect. He had heard that several of the Constitutional Court judges were leaning towards ruling that Ghimpu had been legally elected. Of the six Constitutional Court judges, it appeared that it was now a 50-50 split of three judges on each side. In such a case, said Lupu, if the Court were divided, Ghimpu's election would stand as legal. (Note: It is expected that the Court will announce the results of its deliberations when it meets on September 8.)

How Alliance Compromised on Ghimpu as Speaker

¶10. (C) Lupu also explained to Ambassador the background on how the Alliance had agreed to nominate Ghimpu for Speaker. Lupu and Filat had each firmly insisted that they would not vote for each other as Speaker. Ghimpu had been proposed as a compromise. Lupu told the Ambassador that he feared that electing Ghimpu as Speaker would spook the Russians and Communists, but that he respected Ghimpu as a person. And since Filat and others were increasingly concerned about the possibility of early repeat elections in 2010, Lupu had decided that it was better to agree to Ghimpu's candidacy and allow the Alliance to move forward.

¶11. (C) Lupu also speculated that Filat had agreed to Ghimpu's nomination as Speaker because ultimately Filat had really wanted to be Prime Minister all along. Filat's party also preferred having him to be head of government, as this position holds more influence in administrative and management matters.

Next Steps Moving Forward in Parliament

¶12. (C) Lupu also told the Ambassador that the Alliance had been debating when the Parliament should meet again. As PCRM temporary Speaker Ivan Calin had on August 28 announced the adjournment of the Parliament until September 4, Lupu and Diacov had proposed that Ghimpu should call a Parliamentary session for September 4, and hence all deputies would show up at the same time. Lupu said that Ghimpu had opposed this plan, as he wanted to avoid the drama that would ensure when

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both he and Calin each sought to claim the Speaker's chair. The Alliance planned to meet on September 3 to discuss their next steps. One option was to do nothing until after the Constitutional Court announced its decision on the legality of Ghimpu's election.

¶13. (C) Lupu said that, one way or another, it was necessary to declare the post of President vacant, so that Ghimpu could take over as Acting President. Ghimpu could then nominate Filat as Prime Minister and have him put a new government in place. Lupu said that according to the law, the real vote on the President must take place within 60 days of the Parliament's opening session on August 28, i.e. by October 28. (NOTE: According to our reading of the law, the 60 day clock starts from the date the President vacates the post, i.e. most likely on September 14.)

¶14. (C) Lupu was increasingly convinced that the end results would be early elections in 2010. Lupu said he did not believe in scenarios involving a split in the PCRM; he thought that either the PCRM would officially grant the eight

votes needed to elect the President, or the President would not be elected at all. Asked about Deputy Prime Minister Igor Dodon's suggestion that the PCRM could split (Ref C), Lupu responded that the Ambassador should not listen to Dodon, whose opinions reflected those of Presidential Advisor Mark Tkaciuk. Lupu noted that Tkaciuk had long dreamed of taking over the party in a few years (or even sooner if Voronin left), but he (Lupu) believed that this was impossible and Tkaciuk therefore needed to work through a proxy. Lupu thought Dodon may now be thinking he has a chance to take over soon. (Note: Lupu had formerly been Tkaciuk's protege before he broke with the PCRM.)

¶15. (C) In the interim, Lupu said the Alliance planned legislative changes, including an immediate move to grant more authority to the Parliament. However, the Alliance now understood that it would be harder than they originally thought to make some of the personnel changes they had planned. For example, Parliament did not have the authority to remove the head of Teleradio Moldova, as they had hoped, and would face complications in moving against the Prosecutor General.

Comment

¶16. (C) Though Lupu was skeptical about Voronin's stepping down from the Presidency, our other Alliance interlocutors, such as Filat, believe Voronin sees the handwriting on the wall, and are convinced he will do so. Lupu told the Ambassador that he believes that after eight years in power, Voronin has lost touch with reality. Voronin's anger at Diacov and push for a left-center coalition reflects a previous perception that he could force his will and the world would obey. But the balance of power in Moldova has shifted. He said he was left explaining to both the Russian Ambassador and Voronin that realities have changed. The compromise slate that Voronin proposed would have been desirable in May, but the political configuration has shifted irrevocably since then. The PCRM made its critical error by not nominating Lupu for President then. Now new forces of political change have been unleashed which cannot be pushed back into the box.

CHAUDHRY